United Nations S/2018/777

Security Council

Distr.: General
22 August 2018

Original: English

Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017) and 2401 (2018)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the fifty-fourth submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of resolution 2165 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2191 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2258 (2015), paragraph 5 of resolution 2332 (2016), paragraph 6 of resolution 2393 (2017) and paragraph 12 of resolution 2401 (2018), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on data available to agencies of the United Nations system and from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and other relevant sources. Data from agencies of the United Nations system on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for July 2018.

II. Major developments

Box 1

Key points: July 2018

1. Continued significant military escalation in the south-western Syrian Arab Republic resulted in the displacement of up to 325,000 people by early July. By the end of the month, 180,000 people, including some 100,000 in Qunaytirah Governorate, were estimated to remain newly displaced in affected areas. The United Nations humanitarian response drew on supplies pre-positioned through cross-border deliveries from Jordan, which remained suspended throughout the reporting period, and assistance delivered from inside the country. Nevertheless, those newly displaced in Qunaytirah remained largely cut off from that assistance.

2. Military operations in the south-west involved aerial bombardment and artillery shelling, resulting in civilian deaths and destruction of and damage to civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals. Large numbers of humanitarian workers and service providers were reportedly caught up in the fighting, with many forced to flee alongside other civilians. By the end of July, government forces had reportedly taken control of the vast majority of the south-west.

18-13693 (E) 230818

Please recycle

3. The humanitarian situation in the north-west continued to deteriorate, with the total number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Aleppo and Idlib Governorates having increased by more than 570,000 since the beginning of 2018, to a total of 4.2 million. Thousands of evacuees from the south-west were transported to Idlib, following a pattern seen earlier in the year with the arrival of close to 130,000 internally displaced persons in Idlib between March and May. In northern Aleppo Governorate, insecurity in Afrin and the areas formerly covered by Operation Euphrates Shield continued to have an impact on civilians.

4. On 16 July, an agreement was reached providing for the evacuation of the entire population of Fu'ah and Kafraya, which had been besieged by non-State armed opposition groups since March 2015. On 19 July, the population was transported on buses to the Mahalij shelter in Aleppo Governorate. The United Nations was not a party to the agreement, nor did it have access to the evacuees, but it contributed assistance in coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and other local organizations. With the evacuation of the two villages, the United Nations no longer categorized any areas or communities in the country as besieged as at the end of the reporting period.

5. Some 147,000 civilians have returned to the city of Raqqah since the end of hostilities in October 2017, the high level of explosive hazard contamination notwithstanding.

6. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need. Humanitarian assistance provided from within the country by United Nations agencies reached more than 3.3 million people with food assistance. Four inter-agency humanitarian convoys carrying life-saving relief, food and medical supplies were deployed in July to the hard-to-reach locations of Duma in Rif Dimashq, Hulah in northern rural Homs, Harbinafsih in southern rural Hama and Bayt Jinn, Baytima, Bayt Sabir and Kafr Hawar in Rif Dimashq, reaching 133,500 people in need. In July, the United Nations delivered life-saving food assistance to close to 550,000 people through cross-border deliveries.

3. Since 24 February, when the Security Council adopted resolution 2401 (2018), demanding a cessation of hostilities, military conflict has continued in many parts of the Syrian Arab Republic. Throughout July, air strikes, artillery shelling and sniper fire were reported in the Governorates of Aleppo, Idlib, Ladhiqiyah, Dayr al-Zawr, Homs, Hama, Suwayda', Dar'a and Qunaytirah, as military operations continued between the Government and allied pro-government forces and non-State armed opposition groups. Infighting among non-State armed opposition groups was reported in Aleppo and Idlib Governorates. Sporadic clashes occurred between government forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate.

4. In the south-western Syrian Arab Republic, continued significant military escalation, including air strikes and artillery shelling accompanied by a ground offensive by the Government, supported by allied forces, resulted in deaths, injuries and the displacement of civilians, including many women and children. By the end of July, 180,000 people, including some 100,000 in Qunaytirah Governorate, were estimated to remain newly displaced in affected areas. The United Nations humanitarian response drew on supplies pre-positioned through cross-border deliveries from Jordan, which remained suspended throughout the reporting period, and assistance delivered from inside the country. Nevertheless, those newly displaced in Qunaytirah remained largely cut off from that assistance and exposed to harsh desert conditions. Numerous humanitarian workers and basic service providers were reportedly caught up in the fighting, with many forced to flee alongside other civilians.

5. By late July, government forces had reportedly taken control of the vast majority of the south-west, although active hostilities, including air strikes, continued in the Yarmouk basin area, focused on areas under the control of the Khalid ibn al-Walid Army, a group affiliated with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Serious concerns persisted regarding the exposure of up to 55,000 civilians to the hostilities, as well as reports that the group was restricting the movement of civilians seeking to leave the area. Moreover, ISIL launched suicide attacks on 25 July in Suwayda' Governorate that reportedly killed more than 300 people. The group also reportedly kidnapped women and children. By the end of the reporting period, close to 9,500 civilians, including many women and children, had reportedly been evacuated from the south-west to northern governorates.

6. The humanitarian situation in the north-west continued to deteriorate, with the total number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Aleppo and Idlib Governorates having increased by more than 570,000 since the beginning of 2018, to a total of 4.2 million. Thousands of evacuees from the south-west were transported to Idlib, following a pattern seen earlier in the year with the arrival of close to 130,000 internally displaced persons in Idlib between March and May. In northern Aleppo Governorate, insecurity in Afrin and the areas formerly covered by Operation Euphrates Shield continued to have an impact on civilians.

7. On 16 July, an agreement was reached providing for the evacuation of the entire population of Fu'ah and Kafraya, which had been besieged by non-State armed opposition groups since March 2015. On 19 July, the population was transported on buses to the Mahalij shelter in Aleppo Governorate. The United Nations was not a party to the agreement, nor did it have access to the evacuees, but it contributed assistance in coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and other local organizations. With the evacuation of the two villages, the United Nations no longer categorized any areas or communities in the country as besieged as at the end of the reporting period.

8. The Syrian authorities reported that 9,762 people from eastern Ghutah remained in displacement sites in Rif Dimashq. United Nations personnel were unable to reach those sites for several weeks, but continued to receive reports that men and boys between 15 and 55 years of age accounted for the majority of those remaining. On 1 July, the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered multisectoral assistance to Duma for 25,000 people, completing the convoy of 10 June for 60,000 people in need. On 26 July, United Nations agencies joined a Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoy to Duma, delivering humanitarian aid, including medicines and shelter materials, which had been provided by France and transported into the country with the support of the Russian Federation. United Nations personnel also assessed health needs while in Duma. The resumption of commercial activities and basic services continued to be reported in eastern Ghutah, although access for United Nations personnel remained restricted.

9. Some 147,000 civilians have returned to the city of Raqqah since the end of hostilities in October 2017, the high level of explosive hazard contamination notwithstanding. The United Nations and its partners continued to provide assistance in the city and the broader governorate, reaching more than 530,000 people per month. In Dayr al-Zawr, there continued to be serious concern regarding an unconfirmed number of civilians trapped in ISIL-controlled areas and thus caught up in the military operations in the eastern part of the governorate. Unconfirmed reports were received of many civilian casualties in air strikes in Susah and Baghuz Fawqani on 12 July. On 30 July, it was reported that 40 critical medical cases had been evacuated from the area and that commercial trucks carrying food supplies had entered.

10. In northern Aleppo Governorate, insecurity in Afrin and the areas formerly covered by Operation Euphrates Shield continued to affect civilians. There were reports of protection concerns for the local population and violations of international humanitarian law by armed actors.

11. My Special Envoy for Syria continued his consultations focused on realizing further progress on the implementation of the final statement of the Congress of the Syrian National Dialogue, held in Sochi, Russian Federation, in January 2018, and the establishment of a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned constitutional committee, facilitated by the United Nations, within the framework of the Geneva process and in accordance with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). He chaired informal consultations with senior representatives of Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Russian Federation and Turkey during the Astana-format meeting held in Sochi on 30 and 31 July and looks forward to further discussions early in September in Geneva regarding the committee. He also met representatives of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in Sochi to discuss the political process, together with other interlocutors, including representatives of the armed opposition. The delegation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Sochi underlined its firm commitment to Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons, in particular to helping them to exercise their right to return voluntarily and in safety and dignity. There is a collective responsibility to ensure that returns are in line with agreed-upon international standards.

12. In their joint statement at the conclusion of the Astana-format meeting in Sochi, the Astana guarantors renewed their commitment to undertaking joint efforts aimed at creating the conditions to facilitate the beginning of the constitutional committee's work in Geneva and to building confidence between the parties to the conflict. The statement also reflected the launch of discussions about the conditions necessary for the safe and voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

Protection

13. Air and ground-based strikes continued to kill and injure civilians and damage and destroy civilian infrastructure. Explosive weapons continued to be fired into populated areas, killing and injuring civilians and destroying and damaging vital infrastructure. Explosive hazards in populated areas killed and injured civilians and impeded humanitarian access. The use of improvised explosive devices in some areas added to the complexity of the explosive hazard threat. The many civilian casualties and the scale of the destruction of civilian infrastructure remained a strong indication that violations were continuing of the fundamental rules of distinction, proportionality and precaution and, in particular, of the prohibition on the launching of indiscriminate attacks.

14. Fighting continued to have an impact on civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities, schools, markets and places of worship. According to information received by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), civilian casualties occurred in various governorates, possibly in violation of international humanitarian law (see annex). OHCHR has documented alleged violations committed by parties to the conflict, including government forces and their allies, non-State armed opposition groups and their allies, and Security Council-designated terrorist groups.

15. Notwithstanding the call upon the Syrian authorities by the Human Rights Council, in its resolutions S-18/1 and 19/22, to cooperate with OHCHR, including through the establishment of a field presence with the mandate to protect and promote human rights, OHCHR reporting remained limited, given that the Government had not granted it access to the country.

16. OHCHR continued to receive reports of civilians being detained by non-State armed opposition groups. In an incident on 16 July, a civilian was taken by non-State armed opposition fighters from his office in Afrin in western rural Aleppo Governorate, reportedly for not officially registering his work with the de facto authorities in control of the city.

17. In an incident on 13 July, members of the Syrian Democratic Forces in Raqqah held 25 women who were protesting against the detention of their husbands in one of the prisons run by the group in the city. The women were held for 24 hours before being released after the intervention of tribal and community leaders. They were also accused of having ties to ISIL.

18. The reporting period was also marked by numerous incidents of the killing of civilians and of fighters who had reportedly surrendered. On 25 July, while ISIL launched coordinated suicide attacks on the city of Suwayda' that killed hundreds of people, scores of ISIL militants attacked civilians inside their homes in the eastern and north-eastern parts of the governorate. Civilians were gunned down in front of their families in at least eight villages, while at least 27 women and children were abducted from Shubayki, a village in the eastern part of the governorate. Reports indicate that the people were being used as hostages to compel the government forces and their allies to halt their offensive against ISIL in the Yarmouk basin in western Dar'a Governorate. ISIL fighters reportedly took women from a handful of houses in the village and forced them to knock on their neighbours' doors, then killing and abducting more civilians in their homes. Photographs of some of the abductees were later tweeted by ISIL, with threats to burn them alive if the Government did not cease its operations in western Dar'a Governorate and release ISIL prisoners. Many other civilians remained missing at the time of writing.

19. Reportedly, on 30 and 31 July, ISIL fighters who had surrendered and accepted a reconciliation agreement with the government forces and their allies in the Yarmouk basin were killed by pro-government forces and their allies in Dar'a. Some civilians allegedly affiliated with ISIL were also reportedly killed as the government forces and their allies advanced. The killings reportedly took place in the Yarmouk basin, including in Ma'ariyah and Kuwayyah. OHCHR received several pleas from family members in Ma'ariyah alleging that the men had been killed in front of their family members.

20. The United Nations and its health partners verified two attacks that affected health-care facilities and personnel and left a health worker dead. On 5 July, a high-explosive homemade rocket reportedly struck the Dar'a Directorate of Health building, causing material damage. On 17 July, the national hospital in Nawa was reportedly damaged as a result of the military campaign in the south-west. The hospital was separately operated by both the Directorate of Health and non-State armed groups. Its director was reportedly killed, but no casualties were reported among Directorate staff. The hospital was partially damaged and remained out of service as at the end of the reporting period.

21. Educational facilities also continued to be affected by the fighting. On 18 July, an improvised explosive device reportedly exploded near a school in Salqin, in north-eastern rural Idlib Governorate. No casualties were reported.

Humanitarian access

Box 2
Key points

1. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need. Humanitarian assistance provided from within the Syrian Arab Republic by United Nations agencies based in the country to regularly accessible locations in government-controlled areas reached more than 3.3 million people with food assistance through 2,270 deliveries.

2. Four inter-agency humanitarian convoys carrying life-saving relief, food and medical supplies were deployed in July to the hard-to-reach locations of Duma in Rif Dimashq, Hulah in northern rural Homs, Harbinafsih in southern rural Hama and Bayt Jinn, Baytima, Bayt Sabir and Kafr Hawar in Rif Dimashq, reaching 133,500 people in need.

3. Cross-border assistance, authorized under Security Council resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2393 (2017), remained a vital part of the humanitarian response. In July, 403 trucks (18 consignments) delivered life-saving assistance to more than 680,000 people through cross-border deliveries. Nevertheless, United Nations humanitarian cross-border operations through Jordan remained suspended during the reporting period.

4. Continued significant military escalation in the south-western Syrian Arab Republic resulted in the displacement of up to 325,000 persons by early July. By the end of the month, 180,000 people, including some 100,000 in Qunaytirah Governorate, were estimated to remain newly displaced in affected areas. The United Nations humanitarian response drew on supplies pre-positioned through cross-border deliveries from Jordan, which remained suspended throughout the reporting period, and assistance delivered from inside the country. Nevertheless, those newly displaced in Qunaytirah remained largely cut off from that assistance.

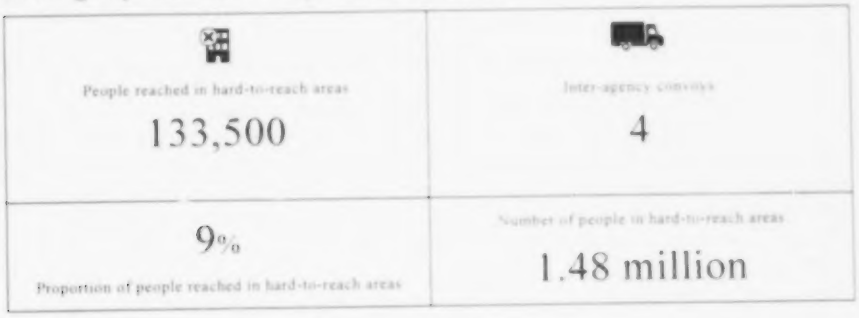
22. The United Nations estimates that, as at the end of the reporting period, some 1.48 million people were living in hard-to-reach locations in the Syrian Arab Republic. An area is considered by the United Nations to be hard to reach when it is not regularly accessible to humanitarian actors for the purposes of sustained humanitarian programming as a result of denial of access, including the need to negotiate access on an ad hoc basis, or owing to restrictions such as active conflict, multiple security checkpoints or the failure of the authorities to provide timely approval.

23. Under the United Nations inter-agency convoy plan for July and August, access was requested to 25 hard-to-reach areas, with the objective of reaching 939,300 people. In July, four inter-agency convoys were authorized to deploy to the hard-to-reach locations of Duma in Rif Dimashq, Hulah in northern rural Homs, Harbinafsih in southern rural Hama and Bayt Jinn, Baytima, Bayt Sabir and Kafr Hawar in Rif Dimashq, providing multisectoral assistance to 133,500 people (see table 1 and figure I).

Table 1
Inter-agency cross-line humanitarian convoys, July 2018

Date	*Location*	*Requested target (number of beneficiaries)*	*Number of beneficiaries reached*	*Type of assistance*
1 July	Duma	25 000	25 000	Multisectoral
15 July	Hulah	71 000	71 000	Multisectoral
15 July	Harbinafsih	18 000	18 000	Multisectoral
19 July	Bayt Jinn, Baytima, Bayt Sabir and Kafr Hawar	19 500	19 500	Multisectoral

Figure I
Inter-agency humanitarian operations, July 2018



Humanitarian response

24. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners reached millions of people in need, including women and children, through all available access routes, including: (a) humanitarian operations from within the Syrian Arab Republic, whereby humanitarian deliveries reach those in need without crossing conflict lines; (b) cross-line convoys, whereby assistance from within the country is delivered across conflict lines; and (c) cross-border deliveries, whereby assistance is provided to those in need from neighbouring countries (see tables 2 and 3). In addition to the United Nations and its partners, the Government and non-governmental organizations continued to deliver life-saving assistance to people in need. The local authorities in many areas controlled by non-State armed opposition groups also continued to provide services where possible.

25. Individual agencies continued to submit requests for single-agency deliveries. Such deliveries are undertaken by United Nations agencies based in Damascus to regularly accessible areas. In July, all 2,270 official requests submitted by the World Food Programme to the Syrian authorities to obtain facilitation letters for the transport of food assistance were approved. UNHCR submitted 43 requests for facilitation letters for the movement of core relief items and livelihood kits, all of which were approved. More than 1.4 million people were reached with multisectoral support, including 188,000 children and mothers receiving primary health-care and immunization services. In addition, an estimated 193,000 children and pregnant and lactating women were provided with nutritional supplements and services. Some 130,000 children benefited from essential learning materials and remedial education, and 209,000 children from protection and psychosocial support services. Approximately 3.3 million people received food assistance and more than 1 million people benefited from water, sanitation and hygiene services and supplies.

Table 2
People reached by the United Nations and other organizations through all modalities, July 2018

Organization	*Number of people reached*
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	30 000
International Organization for Migration	92 000
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	2 840 000
United Nations Children's Fund	1 400 000
United Nations Development Programme	840 000
United Nations Population Fund	300 000
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	132 000
World Food Programme	3 300 000
World Health Organization	760 000

26. In eastern Ghutah, the Syrian authorities reported that 9,762 people remained in displacement sites in Rif Dimashq. United Nations personnel were unable to reach those sites for several weeks, but continued to receive reports that men and boys between 15 and 55 years of age accounted for the majority of those remaining. Moreover, humanitarian access to civilians in need in eastern Ghutah remained challenging. Nevertheless, on 1 July, the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered multisectoral assistance to Duma for 25,000 people, completing the convoy of 10 June for 60,000 people in need. On 26 July, United Nations agencies were authorized to join a Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoy to Duma, delivering humanitarian aid, including medicines and shelter materials, which had been provided by France and transported into the country with the support of the Russian Federation. United Nations personnel also assessed health needs while in Duma.

27. An estimated 138,800 persons remained displaced from Afrin district in the Tall Rif'at, Nubl, Zahra' and Fafin areas of Aleppo Governorate. Those displaced to Tall Rif'at and other areas have largely been accessible to humanitarian organizations operating from Aleppo. Humanitarian access to the city of Afrin from within the Syrian Arab Republic has not yet received the necessary approvals from the Syrian authorities. While the Turkish authorities provide the majority of the response in those areas, the United Nations, through its cross-border humanitarian partners, is also contributing to life-saving services and activities in the district. Particular efforts have been made in the health and food security sectors. Nevertheless, needs are considered to remain high, with most health facilities in rural areas closed, many service providers having fled the area and a large proportion of schools, markets and bakeries not yet functional, owing to explosive remnants of war and the continued absence of staff, workers and tradespeople. In particular, reports indicate that people in the area have high rates of renal problems; dedicated renal treatment has been ramped up.

28. In Raqqah Governorate, an estimated 147,000 people have returned to the city of Raqqah since the end of hostilities in October 2017. Most have settled in areas with comparatively less infrastructure damage and explosive hazard contamination. Scaling up the humanitarian response and capacity has been challenging because of the high level of contamination from mines and unexploded ordnance, which pose significant threats to returnees and humanitarian workers.

29. Cross-border deliveries continued under the terms of resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016) and 2393 (2017) (see figure II and table 3). In line with those resolutions, the United Nations notified the Syrian authorities in

advance of each shipment, including its contents, its destination and the number of beneficiaries expected to be reached.

30. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations as authorized under resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2393 (2017). The Mechanism monitored the delivery of 18 consignments by seven United Nations agencies, consisting of 403 trucks, from three border crossings: 9 from Bab al-Hawa (341 trucks), 8 from Bab al-Salam (57 trucks) and 1 from Ya'rubiyah (5 trucks). There were no concerns or questions about the humanitarian nature of the consignments. The United Nations provided 48-hour notice to the Government regarding all shipments. Once in the country, United Nations partners ensured that the shipments arrived at the designated warehouses. Independent third-party companies contracted by the United Nations ensured independent verification of the assistance arriving at the warehouses and monitored the distribution and/or service provision. The Mechanism continued to benefit from the excellent cooperation of the Governments of Iraq, Jordan and Turkey.

31. Since cross-border operations began in July 2014, following the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014), the United Nations has conducted more than 849 cross-border consignments, with more than 21,396 trucks (14,544 through Bab al-Hawa and 2,210 through Bab al-Salam from Turkey; 4,605 through Ramtha from Jordan; and 37 through Ya'rubiyah from Iraq). Those operations complement and support the aid provided by international and Syrian non-governmental organizations that provide services to millions more from neighbouring countries.

32. Humanitarian cross-border operations through Jordan remained suspended. Nevertheless, the World Food Programme and its implementing partners delivered food assistance to more than 540,000 people from the two authorized cross-border entry points with Turkey. The World Health Organization also conducted health and medical deliveries, providing some 179,000 treatments through the cross-border mechanism. In the northern Syrian Arab Republic, the United Nations Children's Fund delivered winter kits, child protection assistance, nutrition, education, health and water, sanitation and hygiene supplies through cross-border shipments. More than 99,400 people benefited from improved access to clean water through the operation and maintenance of water and sanitation systems. Primary health-care services were provided to 86,000 people through mobile and fixed health services. Some 25,821 children under 5 years of age were reached with micronutrient supplies. Some 34,355 children under 5 years of age, in addition to pregnant and lactating mothers, were screened for acute malnutrition, and 160 of them, found to be severely malnourished, received the appropriate treatment. The United Nations also pre-positioned nutrition supplies sufficient for 150,000 beneficiaries in Idlib and rural Aleppo and is planning another round of pre-positioning there.

33. In the southern Syrian Arab Republic, United Nations humanitarian cross-border operations have been suspended since late June. Humanitarian needs continue to grow, however, with the continued significant military escalation resulting in the displacement of up to 325,000 people by early July. By the end of the month, 180,000 people, including some 100,000 in Qunaytirah Governorate, were estimated to remain newly displaced in affected areas. The United Nations humanitarian response drew on pre-positioned supplies and assistance delivered from inside the country. Nevertheless, those newly displaced in Qunaytirah remained largely cut off from that assistance, given that cross-border deliveries from Jordan remained suspended and access to Qunaytirah from within the country was not authorized.

34. UNHCR and its partners continued to enhance the response to the protection needs of internally displaced persons, returnees and other crisis-affected populations. By the end of July, 23,272 protection interventions had been conducted, reaching

607,258 individuals, including 293,075 benefiting from general protection activities, 6,509 benefiting from child protection activities and 89,890 reached through more than 3,754 awareness-raising campaigns across 12 governorates on the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence. As at July, the total number of functioning UNHCR-funded community centres and mobile units stood at 96 community centres, 17 satellite centres and 81 mobile units, supported by 2,272 outreach volunteers. That network provided protection-related services, including community mobilization, child protection, legal aid, the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence, livelihood services and services for persons with specific needs, to benefit some 2.6 million internally displaced persons, returnees, host communities and other crisis-affected people across 12 governorates. In July, 142,072 internally displaced persons in Damascus, Rif Dimashq, Suwayda', Dar'a, Qunaytirah, Tartus, Ladhiqiyah, Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Hasakah were direct beneficiaries of the UNHCR legal assistance programme, including counselling; awareness sessions on legal topics, including civil documentation and women's rights; and lawyers' direct interventions before courts and administrative bodies.

35. Moreover, the United Nations Population Fund reached some 300,000 people, carrying out activities relating to reproductive health and the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence and youth-related violence. In addition, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) distributed food parcels to some 112,000 Palestine refugees, and 8,468 Palestine refugees displaced from Yarmouk received ready-to-eat food baskets in July. A total of 22,164 individuals received cash assistance through the regular cash distribution round, and 134 Palestine refugees displaced from Yarmouk and eastern Ghutah benefited from a one-time payment of $70 per family. Moreover, according to UNRWA estimates, some 25,000 to 28,000 Palestine refugees are located in the southern Syrian Arab Republic, mainly in the city of Dar'a, Muzayrib and Jilin. UNRWA distributed ready-to-eat food baskets, hygiene kits and non-food items to some 2,300 displaced Palestine refugees in the southern Syrian Arab Republic.

Figure II

Number of beneficiaries assisted by the United Nations and its partners by cluster through cross-border humanitarian deliveries, July 2018

(Thousands)

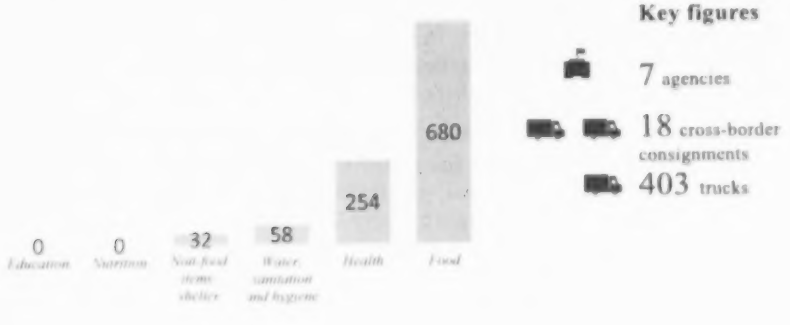


Table 3
Number of beneficiaries targeted through cross-border deliveries by sector and by district, July 2018

Governorate	*District*	*Education*	*Food*	*Health*	*Non-food items/shelter*	*Nutrition*	*Water, sanitation and hygiene*
Aleppo	Bab	–	–	2 080	4 300	–	2 500
Aleppo	I'zaz	–	83 770	212 160	2 500	–	46 250
Aleppo	Jabal Sim'an	–	42 930	–	7 695	–	–
Aleppo	Jarabulus	–	–	2 080	–	–	–
Hama	Muhradah	–	–	–	–	–	–
Hasakah	Qamishli	–	–	26 400	–	–	–
Idlib	Ariha	–	46 750	–	–	–	–
Idlib	Harim	–	338 500	5 000	–	–	3 750
Idlib	Idlib	–	49 000	6 000	17 300	–	5 000
Idlib	Jisr al-Shughur	–	480	–	–	–	–
Idlib	Ma'arrah	–	118 375	–	–	–	–

36. The Russian Federation sent informational bulletins to the United Nations from the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic, in which it outlined the provision of bilateral relief assistance. Other Member States also continued to provide bilateral and other forms of humanitarian assistance.

Visas and registrations

37. A total of 60 new United Nations visa requests were submitted to the Government in July. Of those, 33 were approved, 26 remained pending and 1 was cancelled by the United Nations. Of the new visa applications submitted in June, 22 were approved in July, while 5 remained pending. A total of 67 United Nations visa renewal requests were submitted in July, of which 35 were approved, 31 remained pending and 1 was rejected. An additional 48 requests for visa renewals submitted in June were approved in July. For some United Nations entities in the Syrian Arab Republic, a significant number of staff are not yet in place or cannot be replaced owing to the non-issuance of visas for months, formal requests notwithstanding.

38. A total of 24 international non-governmental organizations are registered with the Government to operate in the country.

Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and premises

39. Agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system continued to implement programmes in areas affected by frequent clashes among parties to the conflict, air strikes, the regular exchange of indirect artillery fire and asymmetrical attacks. As a result of activities relating to the armed conflict, significant populated areas became highly contaminated with unexploded ordnance, explosive remnants of war and landmines, which pose an elevated risk to the implementation of United Nations activities in those areas.

40. Since the beginning of the conflict, dozens of humanitarian workers have been killed, including 22 staff members of the United Nations and organizations of the United Nations system, 18 of whom were staff members of UNRWA; 66 staff members and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent; and 8 staff members and

volunteers of the Palestine Red Crescent Society. Many staff members of international and national non-governmental organizations have also reportedly been killed.

41. A total of 28 staff members of agencies and programmes of the United Nations system (1 staff member of the United Nations Development Programme, 1 staff member of the Department of Safety and Security and 26 UNRWA staff members) were detained or missing as at the end of the reporting period.

III. Observations

42. Intense military activity remained a worrying trend during the reporting period and I am gravely concerned about further military escalation, in particular in the north-western Syrian Arab Republic — a de-escalation area — where some 3 million Syrians continue to reside. Increased military escalation there, similar to that seen elsewhere in the country, would not only trigger further massive population movements but also have catastrophic consequences for civilians in terms of protection and access to humanitarian assistance and basic services. I urge all parties to abide by the de-escalation agreement and I remind all parties to the conflict of their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and civilian objects; not to make civilian objects the target of attack and to take special care in military operations to avoid damage to buildings dedicated to education, including schools; and to respect and protect medical personnel and not to direct attacks against hospitals and other medical facilities. Civilians wishing to flee the fighting should be allowed to do so without hindrance and in full dignity and safety, while those wishing to stay must also be protected. Parties to the conflict may not order the displacement of civilians for reasons relating to the conflict unless the security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons demand it.

43. Ensuring safe, sustained, timely and unimpeded access for people in need throughout the country remains essential to avoiding a further deterioration in the humanitarian situation. However, United Nations access to areas across conflict lines and areas the control of which has recently changed remains severely limited. In areas the control of which has recently changed, access restrictions have been further challenged by the lack of basic services, as service providers have been displaced as part of local agreements reached between the Syrian authorities and non-State armed opposition groups. I remind all parties to the conflict of their obligation under international humanitarian law to respect and protect medical and humanitarian personnel and facilities. The teachers and doctors who provided essential basic services before changes in control must be protected and those whom they supported must continue to receive the essential basic services that they need. I further remind parties that the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need that is impartial in character and conducted without any adverse distinction must be allowed and facilitated without delay.

44. I condemn in the strongest terms the callous attacks directly targeting civilians and threats against civilians, including women and children, perpetrated by ISIL in Suwayda'. Such blatant disregard for human life and dignity, contrary to the obligations of all parties engaged in armed conflict under international law, cannot be tolerated. I equally condemn reports of extrajudicial killings by pro-government forces of fighters who had laid down their arms. I remind all parties that international humanitarian law prohibits violence to the lives of persons and the taking hostage of civilians and fighters who have laid down their arms, as well as the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees that are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples. Such acts constitute serious

violations of common article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and are considered war crimes and gross violations of international human rights law.

45. I reiterate that the perpetrators of serious violations of international humanitarian law must be held accountable. Such a step is central to achieving sustainable peace in the Syrian Arab Republic. I also reiterate my call for the situation in the country to be referred to the International Criminal Court.

46. I also call upon all parties to the conflict, all States, civil society and the United Nations system to cooperate fully with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, in particular by providing information and documentation.

47. The UNHCR protection thresholds and parameters for refugee return remain the normative framework that must guide efforts towards Syrians returning to their homes. I will continue to draw attention to UNHCR expertise and experience stemming from more than 60 years of global operational engagement in responding to massive refugee crises. In any case, the United Nations system stands ready to assist refugees and internally displaced persons who voluntarily return to their place of origin.

48. I continue to support my Special Envoy as he pursues his careful consultations, in an accelerated manner, on the composition of the constitutional committee and the full range of issues needed to launch its proceedings. I continue to call upon Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Russian Federation and Turkey, as the co-conveners of the meeting in Sochi in January 2018, and other key members of the international community to support his efforts. I also call upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the opposition to fully support those efforts as part of reaching a political solution in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015). There can be only one agenda for us all: to end the suffering of the Syrian people and to find a sustainable solution to the conflict in the country through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012.

Annex

Reported incidents affecting civilians, recorded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, July 2018*

Aleppo Governorate

- On 4 July, at least 1 civilian was killed and 17 others were injured when an improvised explosive device detonated close to a crowd of civilians in the town of Hayyah, in the Manbij area of eastern rural Aleppo.
- On 5 July, at least three civilians were injured when a roadside improvised explosive device detonated in the Manbij area.
- On 6 July, an improvised explosive device detonated in the vicinity of a health clinic and close to the office of the Northern Brigade, a non-State armed opposition group, in Jarabulus, north-eastern rural Aleppo. The explosion injured six civilians, including three women and a child.
- On 8 July, three civilians, including a child, were killed and six others injured when an improvised explosive device allegedly attached to a motorbike detonated in a marketplace in the town of Qabbasin, in Bab district, northern Aleppo.
- On 23 July, at around 11 a.m., an attack allegedly employing a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device occurred in the vicinity of the local council building in the town of Akhtarin, northern rural Aleppo. Two civilians were killed and at least 11 others injured.
- On 30 July, two civilians were killed and seven others injured when what were alleged to be ground-based strikes hit the Hamdaniyah neighbourhood of the government-held city of Aleppo.

Hasakah Governorate

- On 4 July, at least six civilians from the same family, including two women and a child, were killed when what was allegedly an air strike hit a residential area in Tarraf, a village held by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the Tall al-Shayir area of southern rural Hasakah.

Qunaytirah Governorate

- On 17 July, at around 10.15 a.m., at least 13 civilians, including 3 women and 10 children from two families, were killed and a woman was seriously injured when what was allegedly an air strike hit a school in the town of Ayn al-Tinah. The victims were reportedly internally displaced persons who had fled from Harah, Dar'a Governorate.

* In line with Security Council resolution 2258 (2015), the present description of incidents that are reported to have occurred during the month relates to compliance with Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) by all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic. The information is provided without prejudice to the work of the Task Force on the Cessation of Hostilities of the International Syria Support Group. The reporting is not a comprehensive listing of all violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of international human rights law that took place in the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period.

Suwayda' Governorate

- On 25 July, at around dawn, coordinated assaults, including with suicide attacks, hit civilian and military targets in the government-held governorate. The attacks hit a marketplace and in the vicinity of the Najmah and Mashnaqah roundabouts in the city of Suwayda'. Other areas in eastern and north-eastern rural parts of the governorate were also hit. ISIL claimed responsibility. Reports indicated that at least 220 people (both military personnel and civilians) were killed or injured, but the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights could not substantiate how many were civilians and how many military personnel.

Dar'a Governorate

- On 8 July, three civilians, including a woman and a child, were killed and four injured when what was allegedly an air strike hit the town of Om Mayadin, eastern Dar'a.
- On 17 July, four civilians, including a woman, were killed when what were alleged to be air strikes hit a residential area in the town of Aliyah, western Dar'a.
- Also on 17 July, two sibling children were killed when what were alleged to be air strikes hit the town of Tasil, in the ISIL-held Yarmouk basin area of western Dar'a.
- On 20 July, four civilians, including a woman and two children, were killed in what were alleged to be air strikes on a residential area in Tasil.
- On 31 July, at least 12 civilians were killed and 27 others injured when what were alleged to be air and ground-based strikes hit the town of Shajarah and the Kuwayyah area in the ISIL-held Yarmouk basin.

Dayr al-Zawr Governorate

- On the afternoon of 6 July, four civilians, including a woman and a child, were killed and five injured when a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device allegedly hit the office of the Syrian Democratic Forces in the town of Busayrah in eastern Dayr al-Zawr, held by the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces.
- On the evening of 12 July, an ice factory was hit by what were alleged to be air strikes in the vicinity of the Muzan intersection between the ISIL-held town of Susah and Baghuz Fawqani in the eastern rural part of the governorate. At least 28 civilians were killed.

Idlib Governorate

- On 10 July, civilians were injured in western rural Idlib in what were alleged to be air strikes in the vicinity of the Jisr al-Shughur area. A woman and two children were injured in Bashiriyah Muhambal and a civilian was injured in the village of Mishmishan, in rural Jisr al-Shughur.
- On 12 July, at around 4 p.m., a residential area in the village of Kanisat Bani Izz, in the Sahl al-Ruj area located near Jisr al-Shughur, was hit by what were alleged to be air strikes, leaving three civilians, including a woman and two children, dead and eight civilians, including five women, injured.